

Grace Cooper

September 20, 2023



Grace Marie Zottola Cooper, age 94, passed away peacefully on May 30, 2023, in Crescent City, CA. She was born September 6, 1928, in Tracy, CA to Ernest and Mary (Caso) Zottola.

Grace is survived by her sons Henry A. Cooper, John, Ernie (Carol) and Vaughn, as well as seven grandchildren (Jon (Jenny), Anthony (Jenny), Christina, Miko, Emily, Orion, and Sophia) and ten great-grandchildren (Evan, Willie, Lila, Adalynn, Kylie, Lillyanna, Michael, Valentina, Tallulah, and Francesca).

She was preceded in death by her parents, Ernest and Mary, her husband Frank and her children Frank, Henry G., Maria, and Mike as well as her brother Jerry Zottola and his wife Gertie.

Grace is also survived by her daughter-in-law Debbie (Mike); a special thanks to Debbie who cared for Gracie when her health started to decline in 2020 and who set up a team of caregivers that treated our mom with so much love: Avina, Lucy, Maria, Sunshine, and Rhonda - you ladies have our heartfelt thanks. Gracie is also survived by her Nieces and Nephews who she adored: Tony, Tina, Gretchen, Tami, Trudi, Tim, and Gina; you were all a constant source of loving support, and she loved you dearly.

“Gracie” grew up during the Great Depression and was educated in parochial and state schools and it was at Del Norte High School in Crescent City, CA that she met the love of her life Frank Cooper; they married on August 28th, 1950, and had eight children, 7 sons and a daughter, with the youngest, Vaughn, born in 1965. When we were older, we would say “Mom, you were pregnant for basically 15 straight years - how did you do it?” She would respond “I loved every minute of it.” Of course, occasionally, while we were all outside

playing, she would lock the front door and the sliding glass door that led to the backyard and not let us in for a few hours; we figured it out after a while that this was “Mom’s time.” She was a housewife extraordinaire, had bag lunches lined up and ready to take to school each morning, could sew and fix any tear in our pants, shirts and uniforms and did more laundry than any one person should have to do in a lifetime; in fact, in 1973 when we moved to Aptos, CA and there was five of us children still at home she made the decision that we would all learn how to do our own laundry - we all learned the hard way and ruined many a piece of clothing but she stuck to her guns and we figured it out!

A few years after Vaughn was born Gracie went back to school and first got her A.A. Degree and then at 43 years old she earned her B.A. Degree in English; many of the conversations with our mom over the years started with or ended with her saying “You know that I’m an English Major.”

During those conversations Gracie could have you laughing, crying, or so pissed off you couldn’t see straight - and this could all happen in the same conversation! She had her non-negotiables when it came to family, country, politics and religion and you crossed her at your own risk; there was no way you were going to win a debate with her!! Gracie had a gift for writing, and she was still sending out letters to family and friends until the day she died; a huge THANK YOU to all her Pen Pals - you know who you are.

English Major or not, Gracie Cooper could bake and cook! Her spaghetti sauce, her raviolis and her cookies were legendary, in fact, there was always a huge stack of homemade cookies on the kitchen counter.

Growing up in Aptos, our buddies knew there was always “leftovers” of every type in the backyard outdoor refrigerator and there was a constant procession of teenage boys back there starting about 10pm on most Friday and Saturday nights - you all, too, know who you are! After all us children left the house, we would still come back to grab a bag of homemade red sauce and raviolis out of the freezer.

We still don’t know the connection, but Gracie took her English Degree and opened up A Touch of Class Hair Salon on Soquel Avenue in Aptos near the original Piggies Market; she and her best friends, Miss Connie and Miss Marilyn, went to Beauty School and graduated with honors as Cosmetologists and they ran a very successful business - it was the place to be. One of us boys would get dropped off there each Sunday afternoon to clean the inside of the salon; we always expected that there would be plenty of hair to sweep up off the floor, mirrors and brushes and combs to be cleaned and, of course, the dreaded clean-up of the toilet and bathroom but what astonished us each time was the amount of empty beer cans and wine bottles we would have to haul out to the dumpster - A Touch of Class was rocking back in the day ! Again, you know who you are

One of the great joys of our mother’s life was the trips she took with our dad before his death; they traveled to England, Scotland, Wales, China, Japan, Hawaii, Mexico, and many times, to Italy. They loved the history of all the regions they visited and somehow always ended up in a little Pub off the beaten path where they instantly became friends with the locals - our mother, the English Major, had the gift of gab! During her marriage and our upbringing, our mother waited and planned for 40 years to visit Our Blessed Mother’s

shrines and, along with our father, they took their Pilgrimage first to Fatima, Portugal then to Rome, Italy and, finally, on to Medjagorje, Yugoslavia; they described these travels to us kids simply as “blessed events.”

In her later years, Gracie took knitting and crocheting to a level that would be hard to surpass; she was at it 5-6 hours a day, seven days a week. She would lose her crochet needle at least once a day and everything in the house came to a halt until that needle was found (always in between the cushions on her sofa); we would tell her that she has 20 other needles, but she had to have her favorite before she could continue. There would be no yarn left on the shelves of Walmart in Crescent City after mom sent one of us boys down there to buy everything they had; everytime we would feel bad for the next old lady coming through only to find the shelves empty (we never told our mom, but we always left a few “good” rolls).

We have a hole in our hearts here on earth and we wish we could have one more night watching a Giants game or some old movie with you mom, but we are happy that our sister and brothers now have both their mother and father with them in heaven and we’re certain the party in heaven has just started!

Our Mother loved animals and she took in many stray cats and dogs over the years; please feel free to make a donation to your local SPCA.

Services will be private.